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38 CFR Ch. I (7–1–10 Edition)

agreements and expenses for reasonableness.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7105(d)(1); 38 U.S.C. 5902, 5903, 5904)

[57 FR 4109, Feb. 3, 1992, as amended at 73 FR 29879, May 22, 2008]

§§ 20.801–20.899 [Reserved]

Subpart J—Action by the Board

§ 20.900 Rule 900. Order of consideration of appeals.

(a) *Docketing of appeals.* Applications for review on appeal are docketed in the order in which they are received. Cases returned to the Board following action pursuant to a remand assume their original places on the docket.

(b) *Appeals considered in docket order.* Except as otherwise provided in this Rule, appeals are considered in the order in which they are entered on the docket.

(c) *Advancement on the docket—(1) Grounds for advancement.* A case may be advanced on the docket on the motion of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, a party to the case before the Board, or such party's representative. Such a motion may be granted only if the case involves interpretation of law of general application affecting other claims, if the appellant is seriously ill or is under severe financial hardship, or if other sufficient cause is shown. "Other sufficient cause" shall include, but is not limited to, administrative error resulting in a significant delay in docketing the case or the advanced age of the appellant. For purposes of this Rule, "advanced age" is defined as 75 or more years of age. This paragraph does not require the Board to advance a case on the docket in the absence of a motion of a party to the case or the party's representative.

(2) *Requirements for motions.* Motions for advancement on the docket must be in writing and must identify the specific reason(s) why advancement on the docket is sought, the name of the veteran, the name of the appellant if other than the veteran (e.g., a veteran's survivor, a guardian, or a fiduciary appointed to receive VA benefits on an individual's behalf), and the applicable Department of Veterans Affairs file number. The motion must be filed

with: Director, Administrative Service (014), Board of Veterans' Appeals, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420.

(3) *Disposition of motions.* If a motion is received prior to the assignment of the case to an individual member or panel of members, the ruling on the motion will be by the Vice Chairman, who may delegate such authority to a Deputy Vice Chairman. If a motion to advance a case on the docket is denied, the appellant and his or her representative will be immediately notified. If the motion to advance a case on the docket is granted, that fact will be noted in the Board's decision when rendered.

(d) *Consideration of appeals remanded by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.* A case remanded by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for additional development or other appropriate action will be treated expeditiously by the Board without regard to its place on the Board's docket.

(e) *Postponement to provide hearing.* Any other provision of this Rule notwithstanding, a case may be postponed for later consideration and determination if such postponement is necessary to afford the appellant a hearing.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7107, Pub. Law No. 103–446, § 302)

[57 FR 4109, Feb. 3, 1992, as amended at 60 FR 51923, Oct. 4, 1995; 61 FR 20453, May 7, 1996; 65 FR 14472, Mar. 17, 2000; 68 FR 53683, Sept. 12, 2003]

§ 20.901 Rule 901. Medical opinions and opinions of the General Counsel.

(a) *Opinion from the Veterans Health Administration.* The Board may obtain a medical opinion from an appropriate health care professional in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs on medical questions involved in the consideration of an appeal when, in its judgment, such medical expertise is needed for equitable disposition of an appeal.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5103A(d), 7109)

(b) *Armed Forces Institute of Pathology opinions.* The Board may refer pathologic material to the Armed

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Forces Institute of Pathology and request an opinion based on that material.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7109(a))

(c) *Opinion of the General Counsel.* The Board may obtain an opinion from the General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs on legal questions involved in the consideration of an appeal.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7104(c))

(d) *Independent medical expert opinions.* When, in the judgment of the Board, additional medical opinion is warranted by the medical complexity or controversy involved in an appeal, the Board may obtain an advisory medical opinion from one or more medical experts who are not employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Opinions will be secured, as requested by the Chairman of the Board, from recognized medical schools, universities, clinics, or medical institutions with which arrangements for such opinions have been made by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. An appropriate official of the institution will select the individual expert, or experts, to give an opinion.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7109)

(e) For purposes of this section, the term “the Board” includes the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, any Deputy Vice Chairman, and any Member of the Board before whom a case is pending.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5107(a), 7104(c), 7109)

[57 FR 4109, Feb. 3, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 20453, May 7, 1996; 66 FR 38159, July 23, 2001; 69 FR 19937, Apr. 15, 2004]

§ 20.902 Rule 902. Filing of requests for the procurement of opinions.

The appellant or representative may request that the Board obtain an opinion under Rule 901 (§ 20.901 of this part). The request must be in writing. It will be granted upon a showing of good cause, such as the identification of a complex or controversial medical or legal issue involved in the appeal which warrants such an opinion.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 5107(a), 7102(c), 7104(c), 7109)

§ 20.903 Rule 903. Notification of evidence secured and law to be considered by the Board and opportunity for response.

(a) *If the Board obtains a legal or medical opinion.* If the Board requests an opinion pursuant to Rule 901 (§ 20.901 of this part), the Board will notify the appellant and his or her representative, if any. When the Board receives the opinion, it will furnish a copy of the opinion to the appellant, subject to the limitations provided in 38 U.S.C. 5701(b)(1), and to the appellant's representative, if any. A period of 60 days from the date the Board furnishes a copy of the opinion will be allowed for response, which may include the submission of relevant evidence or argument. The date the Board furnishes a copy will be presumed to be the same as the date of the letter or memorandum that accompanies the copy of the opinion for purposes of determining whether a response was timely filed.

(b) *If the Board considers law not already considered by the agency of original jurisdiction.* If, pursuant to § 19.9(b)(2) of this chapter, the Board intends to consider law not already considered by the agency of original jurisdiction and such consideration could result in denial of the appeal, the Board will notify the appellant and his or her representative, if any, of its intent to do so and that such consideration in the first instance by the Board could result in denial of the appeal. The notice from the Board will contain a copy or summary of the law to be considered. A period of 60 days from the date the Board furnishes the notice will be allowed for response, which may include the submission of relevant evidence or argument. The date the Board furnishes the notice will be presumed to be the same as the date of the letter that accompanies the notice for purposes of determining whether a response was timely filed. No notice is required under this paragraph if the Board intends to grant the benefit being sought or if the appellant or the appellant's representative has advanced or otherwise argued the applicability of the law in question.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7104(a), 7109(c)).

[67 FR 3105, Jan. 23, 2002, as amended at 69 FR 53808, Sept. 3, 2004]